BRITISH COLUMBIA'S HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM

Government's Response to the
BC Heritage Rivers Board's 1999 Nomination Report

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The following ministries were involved in preparing this report:

Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
Ministry of Forests
Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Ministry of Fisheries
Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture
Ministry of Energy and Mines
Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations

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INTRODUCTION

British Columbia is recognised nationally and internationally for its rich natural heritage and superlative recreational opportunities interspersed with unique cultural treasures. This heritage includes the province's rivers and lakes, which are conduits for the lifeblood of its land and its people. From the Fraser, the largest river in the province, to tiny creeks too numerous to count, waterways are a source of pride to British Columbians.

In January 1984, Canada established the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The purpose of this system is to recognise Canadian rivers that are of national or international significance, and ensure that they are managed for their outstanding heritage values for the benefit and enjoyment of Canadians.

In June 1993, British Columbia joined the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. This was done in response to the recommendations of an advisory committee appointed by the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. The committee's recommendations are set out in its March 1993 report *What's in it for the river?*

In May 1995, British Columbia established the BC Heritage Rivers System, and a BC Heritage Rivers Board (the "Board"). The purpose of this system is to promote good stewardship of all rivers, identify and recognise British Columbia rivers that serve as models representing the range of provincial river values, and nominate to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System those British Columbia rivers that are of national or international significance.

In September 1995, the Board submitted to government its initial recommendations regarding river recognition. Its recommendations were set out in its report *British Columbia's Rivers: Inaugural Candidates for the Provincial System*. Government responded in May 1996, accepting seven nominated rivers, thereby establishing the foundation of the system. These rivers are the Adams, Babine, Blackwater, Cowichan, Fraser, Skagit and Stikine.

In September 1996, the Board submitted to government its recommendations regarding the 1996 nominations for river recognition. These recommendations were set out in its report *Candidate Heritage Rivers: A Report of the British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board 1996*. In June 1997 government responded by adding the Atnarko, Bella Coola, Kechika and Kettle rivers to the BC Heritage Rivers System. Government also formally nominated the Fraser River to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System in February 1997, in response to the recommendation put forward in the Board's initial report.

In September 1997, the Board submitted to government its recommendations regarding the 1997 nominations for river recognition. These recommendations were set out in its report *Candidate Heritage Rivers: A Report of the British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board 1997*. In May 1998 government responded by adding the Alouette, Columbia, Middle, Peace, Prophet, Stuart rivers and Mission Creek to the BC Heritage Rivers

System. Government also formally nominated the Cowichan River to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System in May 1999, in response to the recommendation put forward in the Board's 1997 report.

In September 1999, the Board submitted to government its recommendations regarding the 1999 nominations for river recognition. These recommendations are set out in its report *BC Heritage Rivers: A Report of the British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board 1999*. The following is in response to that report.

OBJECTIVES AND OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The objectives of the BC Heritage Rivers System are:

- To raise awareness and promote good stewardship of British Columbia's rivers;
- To encourage public discussion of the heritage values of rivers;
- To identify rivers in British Columbia that reflect a diversity of natural heritage, cultural heritage and recreational values;
- To ensure that the stewardship of rivers is addressed in existing and future land use planning and management processes; and
- To recognise the strong link between First Nations interests and river stewardship.

The operating principles of the BC Heritage Rivers System are:

- To operate within existing legislation, policies and planning processes;
- To provide input and guidance that is not regulatory or directive in nature;
- To focus on the primary stem of the river, rather than on the broader river corridor or the entire watershed;
- To reinforce the work of stakeholders, First Nations and planning tables in addressing water resource stewardship;
- To encourage co-ordination and collaboration among stakeholders and First Nations; and
- To monitor river management to determine whether river management guidelines are being achieved.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities for the BC Heritage Rivers System have been set out to enable the Board and government to work together in a co-operative and flexible manner. Each has a role to play in executing a series of linked phases leading to the identification, nomination, recognition, planning and management, and monitoring of British Columbia's most significant rivers.

The Board's Roles and Responsibilities:

The Board was established to provide a voice for heritage river values at the community level and to encourage the consideration of those values in land use planning.

The Board's roles and responsibilities are:

- **Identification:** The Board identifies rivers for possible nomination to government by seeking public input, assessing rivers that are brought forth and identifying those rivers that meet its identification criteria.

- **Nomination:** The Board nominates rivers for possible recognition by government by evaluating identified rivers against selection guidelines and submitting to government the rivers that meet its selection guidelines. The Board also distributes the results of its identification and nomination phases to the public. The Board's identification criteria and selection guidelines are set out in its September 1995 and 1996 reports.

- **Monitoring:** The Board, together with the public and government, monitors the planning and management of heritage rivers in relation to a vision and management guidelines approved by government for each recognised heritage river. The Board reports annually to government and the public.

Government's Roles and Responsibilities:

Government publicly responds to the Board's nominations by accepting them, rejecting them or deferring a decision on them pending further consideration. Acceptance may include acceptance with modifications.

In the event of acceptance of the Board's nominations, government's roles and responsibilities are:

- **Recognition**: Government acknowledges the significance of the rivers that the Board has nominated by recognising the rivers as "BC Heritage Rivers" through Order-In-Council proclamations for commemorative purposes. Government also endorses a vision and management guidelines for each recognised heritage river.

- **Planning and management**: Government communicates its endorsed vision and management guidelines to land use planning tables and resource management agencies as input and guidance for consideration in existing or future plans and planning processes.

- **Monitoring and adjustment**: Government monitors the long-term achievement of the vision and management guidelines for each heritage river, and, where appropriate, makes adjustments.

HERITAGE RIVER RECOGNITION

Heritage river recognition gives local groups a spotlight to illustrate community-based river stewardship practices. Benefits offered by heritage river recognition include:

- opportunity to focus government, business and community actions along the river;
- increased awareness and appreciation of river values;
- encouragement to understand, respect and celebrate historical connections to rivers;
- opportunity to enhance recreation and tourism benefits for local communities.

Heritage river recognition operates within the following policy and planning context:

Policy Context:

The BC Heritage Rivers System provides a framework for recognising British Columbia rivers with provincially significant natural heritage, cultural heritage or recreational values.

The system leads to heritage river *recognition*, which is commemorative rather than regulatory. It is neither a land use decision nor a legal designation, but it is intended to provide a greater focus and profile for key rivers. It operates entirely within existing legislation, intergovernmental agreements, policies and planning processes and entails no new legislation or regulations. The system recognises provincially significant rivers for one or more of their natural, ecological, historical, economic development, First Nations, and recreational values, but does not preclude future land use decisions that may modify the present character of the river.

The recognition of a river within the BC Heritage Rivers System is without prejudice to any aboriginal rights that aboriginal people may have. It is without prejudice to the position British Columbia or First Nations may take in future treaty negotiations. Heritage river recognition shall not diminish or restrict the use and enjoyment of a river by aboriginal people.

Where a heritage river flows through a designated protected area, the river will be managed to retain its free-flowing character. Where a heritage river flows outside a protected area, the river will be managed to give consideration for maintaining its free-flowing character in the context of meeting multiple use objectives.

Local community groups, stakeholders and public officials will be encouraged to celebrate the recognition of each heritage river with commemorative events such as riverside ceremonies, the unveiling of plaques and development of information material. In years to come, heritage rivers will no doubt come to play an important role in promoting river-related recreation, cultural heritage and tourism throughout the province and increased world-wide recognition for British Columbia's rich river heritage.

Planning Context:

Heritage river recognition represents government's commitment to raise awareness of the heritage values of provincially significant rivers. Heritage river recognition is neither another level of planning nor a new planning process. Government's approved vision and management guidelines for a recognised heritage river are intended as input and guidance for, not as a directive to, existing or future plans or planning processes.

For recognised heritage rivers within areas covered by approved land and water management plans, the vision and management guidelines for each river must be consistent with the approved plans.

For recognised heritage rivers within areas covered by on-going planning processes, or not yet subject to land use planning, the vision and management guidelines for each river are intended to serve as input and guidance on river management issues for resource managers and planning tables.

Planning tables and planning processes, such as Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) and Water Use Planning, will themselves provide a forum for continued and broader discussion and consultation about visions or management guidelines for recognised heritage rivers.

THE BOARD'S 1999 NOMINATIONS

The Board's report described the attributes of natural heritage, cultural heritage and recreational values that underlie a river's recognition within the BC Heritage Rivers System. The report also addressed the importance of better stewardship for all rivers in the province and nominated one new river for heritage river recognition.

The Board nominated the Campbell River to be recognised as part of the BC Heritage Rivers System. The nomination document recommends a vision and management guidelines for the river. The Board also reaffirmed its nomination of the Horsefly River to the BC Heritage Rivers System, along with the originally recommended vision and management guidelines.

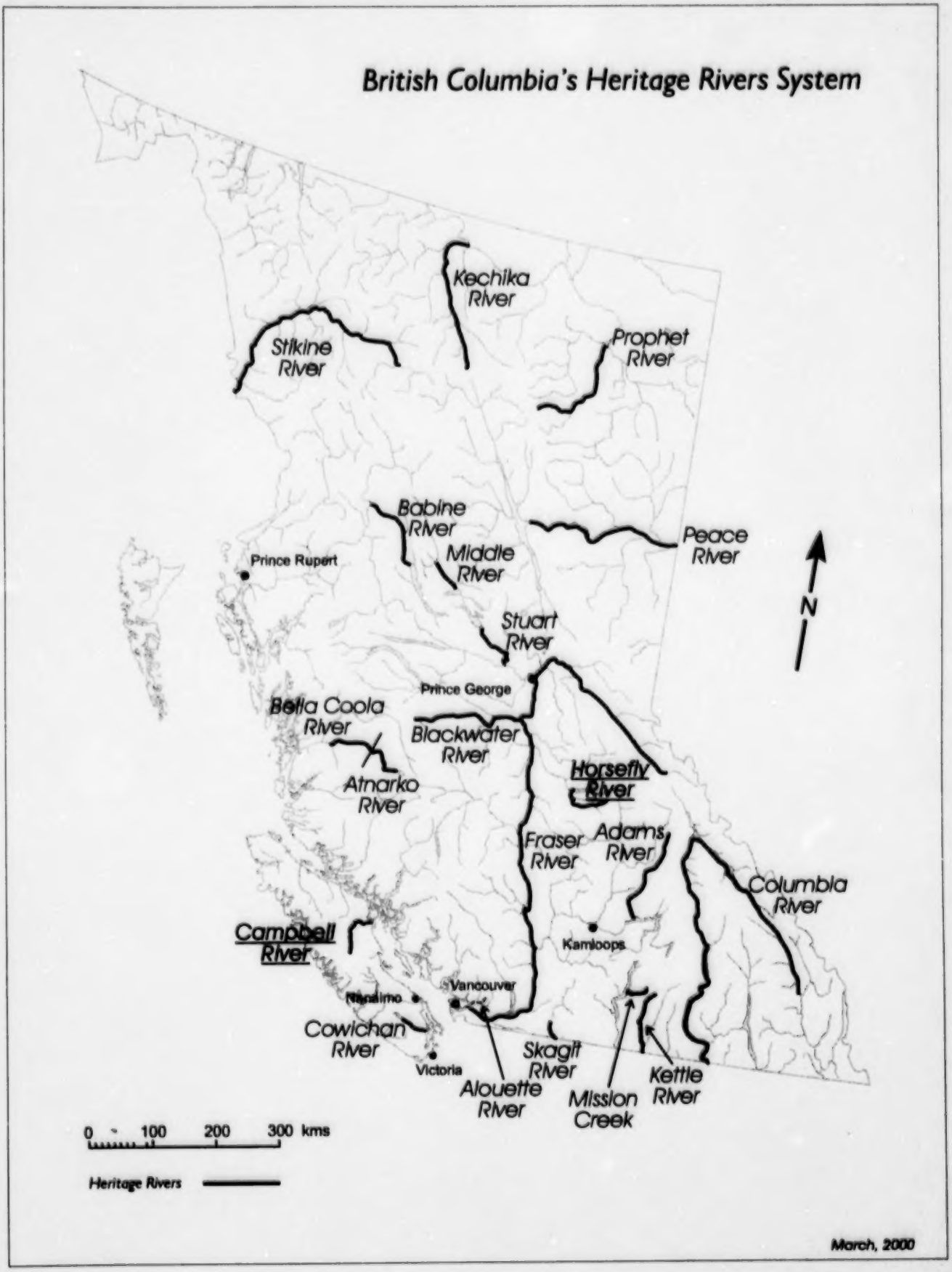
GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

Government acknowledges the significant work of the BC Heritage Rivers Board in fulfilling its mandate of identifying about twenty British Columbia rivers that are to serve as models representing the range of provincial river values. This work has launched Canada's first provincial Heritage Rivers System and will serve as a foundation to promote good stewardship of all rivers.

The Board has also put forward three significant rivers, the Fraser, Cowichan and Stikine, which will serve as valuable contributions to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.

Government endorses the Campbell and Horsefly Rivers as BC Heritage Rivers. River-specific visions and management guidelines for each of these are provided in the following section.

As in 1997, the Board has nominated a river that has significant hydroelectric production - the Campbell River. In recognising this river as a BC Heritage River, the government is acknowledging this cultural and economic heritage and endorsing the concept of a working river where economic activities can be compatible with natural heritage and recreational values.


British Columbia's Heritage Rivers System
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Stikine River
Prophet River
Babine River
Middle River
Peace River
Prince Rupert
N
Stuart River
Prince George
Bella Coola River
Blackwater River
Atnarko River
Horsefly River
Fraser River
Adams River
Columbia River
Campbell River
Kamloops
Vancouver
Nanaimo
Cowichan River
Victoria
Skagit River
Alouette River
Mission Creek
Kettle River
0 100 200 300 kms
Heritage Rivers
March, 2000

CAMPBELL RIVER

Vision:
A model of co-operation between community and industry in the management of a river for its recreation and industrial uses, including power generation, consistent with its well known natural and cultural heritage values.

Management Guidelines:

- To promote the co-operative management of the watershed through involvement of the full range of stakeholders, including First Nations, power producers and fishers.
- To manage water flows and water quality in order to generate hydroelectric power, support healthy fish habitat and populations, and provide some protection against flooding of adjacent properties.
- To protect the river's capability as important fish habitat.
- To encourage the expansion of river recreational and educational opportunities for the benefit of local residents and as part of the tourism appeal of the region which are consistent with the diversity of river uses.

HORSEFLY RIVER

Vision:
A river managed to balance integrated resource use activities with the conservation of natural heritage values.

Management Guidelines:

- To manage the river to protect and conserve it's capability as a critical sockeye salmon and rainbow trout spawning river.
- To manage forestry and other resource uses to ensure that salmon, rainbow and kokanee production is sustained, along with associated recreational values.
- To ensure the management of the river is consistent with the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan and Sub-regional Land and Resource Management Planning.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR OTHER RECOMMENDED RIVERS

Tatshenshini River

Government reserves the opportunity for future deliberation on the potential for bestowing heritage river recognition on the Tatshenshini River following further discussions with First Nations.

Yakoun River

The review response for the Yakoun River, on the Queen Charlotte Islands, indicated that there is still no clear sense of how land use planning, including further community-based consultation and discussion, especially with the Haida Nation, is to proceed. Any future Queen Charlotte Islands Land and Resource Management Planning Process will likely be the appropriate forum for this discussion. Communication linkages will be established with this process, when under way, in order to determine whether or not to confirm the nomination.